ELEMENTARY READERS IN ENGLISH: GRADE IV—No. I

V. Manikkam

KOVALAN

BY
V. VEERARAGHAVAN

MADRAS:
C. COOMARASWAMY NAIDU & SONS
1925

 [Price As. 7

SUPPLEMENTARY READERS IN ENGLISH

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TO

MY FRIEND

M. KRISHNASWAMY.

Printed at the "Aurora Press," Madras

KOVALAN

I. THE ANCIENT CITY.

The waves of the Bay of Bengal wash the sands of the Coromandal Coast and foam over the waters of the rivers of South India at their mouths. The river Cauvery, after watering the fertile plains of the Deccan, mixes with the waters of the Bay; and at its mouth can be seen at the present day a few fishermen's huts that are all the remains of a splendid city that flourished in ancient times. Many hundreds of years back, the sea rushed into the land and submerged the famous city of Pukar—palaces, temples, and all.

The ancient city was an excellent port having a big harbour known by the name of Sangamuka, where thousands of boats and innumerable ships with masts and spread sails busied themselves in unloading the freight from foreign countries or in taking in the rich produce of the coastal plains and carrying it elsewhere. The town commanded the trade

of the surrounding country over which the Chola King ruled. Its trade grew so large, its merchants became so rich, its mansions rose so beautifully in the sky, and its gardens so picturesquely surrounded it, that, in time, the King had to change his capital from Urayur. He built a fine palace at Pukar, surpassing in splendour all the palaces that his forefathers had built, and resided all the year round in Pukar only. This city, thus, became the capital of a great kingdom and remained the Mistress of the southern seas till it was blotted out by the sea.

The town itself was most beautiful to look at. Its streets were broad and lined on both sides by palatial buildings. The towers of many a temple rose into the sky and blazed brightly against sun-light as well as moon-light. Groves of fruit trees and gardens of flower plants surrounded it on all sides. Herds of cattle and flocks of sheep grazed quietly on the meadows beyond the gardens. The gentle breeze wafted the fragrant smell of the rose and the jasmine. And, on the whole, Pukar stood out as the first city in South India.

At the time of the Chola King, Karikkal, there lived in this city, a merchant prince

named Masathvan. Whilst he was eighteen, he was married; and a few years after, his wife bore him a son, whom he named Kovalan and brought up tenderly. Kovalan grew up to be the most handsome lad in all Pukar. At an early age, he was put to school where he shone as the brightest boy among his mates, and learnt all the sciences; and, at the age of sixteen, Kovalan became a fit lad to enter life.

Masathvan had as his friend, one, Manaikan, who was as rich a merchant as himself. Manaikan was slightly younger than Masathvan, and was married a few years after him. Four years after Kovalan was born, Manaikan's wife bore him a daughter whom he named Kannaki.

Kannaki grew up into a lovely girl, and was considered the most beautiful maiden in the city. She was learned in all the fine arts that made her an accomplished young maiden; and at the age of twelve, her hand was sought by all the rich merchant lads of the town.

One day, Masathvan met his friend, Manaikan, at the Sangamuka, and proposed a marriage between Kovalan and Kannaki. Manaikan was immensely pleased with the proposal.

Masathvan was very rich; he was the owner of a hundred ships—the biggest in the harbour. He had built for himself a splendid palace, all of marble and fine granite. Besides, Kovalan was the most handsome youth in all the country round. Manaikan considered deeply and fell in with the marriage proposal. The wedding day was soon fixed; and all preparations for the grand day were made.

The happy morning dawned; and the marriage was performed with great pomp. There were all the pipers of the country with drums and pipes of all kinds. The temple musicians came there to sing; and many songsters, too, were hired. There was dancing to the accompaniment of music.

A splendid feast was held; and all kinds of rich viands were served to hundreds of people.

The marriage ceremony itself was then performed. The bride and bride-groom made vows and promises to love each other for all time, and swore to share each other's joys and sorrows. Then Kovalan tied the *Tali* round Kannaki's neck; and Kannaki, the most beautiful maiden became the wedded wife of the rich merchant, Kovalan.

A magnificent palace, built by Kovalan's mother for her son, was set apart for the newly-married couple. Kovalan and Kannaki lived in that palace for many happy years. Kovalan loved his wife tenderly. He appreciated her accomplishments much more than her personal beauty. He thought her an angel; and spent many years in her company.

To Kannaki, Kovalan was a God. She knew no deity greater than her husband. She adored and worshipped him. She spent her time with him and for him. Thus, years rolled away.

II. A DEVADASI.

In days of old, there was a community of women, called *Devadasis*, or "Servants of God", among the Hindus. From a very young age, these *dasis* were trained in all the fine arts, and were well educated. They had to spend their time in the service of the Almighty. Every day they had to go to the temple and there dance and sing before the Image of the Shining One. They were maintained at the cost of the temple to which they were devoted.

The "Servants of God" had their lovers, for they were none of them married. Many a young and fashionable Hindu thought it an honour to be the lover of a beautiful lady belonging to this community. They spent their time with the girls in singing and dancing; and most of them lost themselves so much in their love for them, that they spent away all their wealth in adorning them with costly jewels and giving them all comforts besides. In this way, many rich young men were reduced to poverty in a short time; and when they lost all their wealth, they were abandoned by the women, who favoured others who were still young and rich.

There were many in Pukar who belonged to this community. A good many of them were in their teens and looked most lovely. They sang sweetly at the temples and danced finely before the Image. They attracted the eyes of all young men in the city, for they were all surpassingly beautiful. But none of them were half so lovely as Madavi, who was also a "Servant of God".

She was the daughter of Chitra, a famous stage-dancer of the town. At the age of five, she was sent to school and, two years later she

passed into the care of the best dancing master in Pukar, whose training she imbibed for five years. When she reached the age of twelve, Chitra, her mother determined to put her abilities to test in the presence of the King himself. One summer night, a few hours after sunset, she was led forth into the brilliantly illumined state-chamber where were assembled all the elite of Pukar society in the presence of Karikkal Chola and the Queen. The *yal*, a stringed musical instrument of those days sent out sweet music; the flute blew merrily; and the timbrel rang sweetly. And to this sweet harmonious music, Madavi danced; and danced, till all the spectators were entranced. Her transcendent beauty coupled with her bewitching gait set her off so well in the dance, that all the people assembled in that hall including the King himself, gazed and gazed on her in silent wonder. She demonstrated the art of dance to such perfection that every one swore he had never seen nor hoped to see ever after, such a dance. Madavi came out of the test very creditably; and the King, awarded a very costly necklace—all of emeralds, as a prize for the best dancer in Pukar.

Chitra was proud of her daughter; but the latter was prouder still. The bewitching Madavi knew that the richest youths of Pukar would be in the run for her hand; but she determined to choose as her lover the noblest and the most handsome of them all. For this purpose, she had a life-like picture of herself drawn and hung at the market place. She set a vendor, in whose hands she gave the emerald necklace and, fixing its price at five thousand pagodas, asked the vendor to bring her the person who was rich enough to buy that costly jewel. And thus, it came to pass that a fine picture was hung at the market place; and by its side stood a garland-vendor crying hoarse, "Whoso buyeth this precious jewel shall have along with it the most lovely damsel in the world, the fair Madavi. The necklace costs five thousand pagodas only. Buy soon and be not disappointed."

As Fate would have it, Kovalan was walking through the market that morning. The shrill voice of the vendor attracted him to the spot; and for the first time, he set his eyes on the finely drawn form of the *Devadasi*. And O! What surpassing beauty did he detect in her features! What personal charms did he

find in the picture! What winning manners did he conclude the original of the figure ought to possess! He was attracted to it as he had been by nothing else before. He loved the figure, and wanted to look at Madavi herself. He, therefore, paid the price of the necklace on the spot, and taking it with him, hastened away to Madavi's home.

When Kovalan saw Madavi, he was struck with her captivating beauty. He loved her far more than he loved Kannaki. He completely forgot about his own home and spent the time entirely with Madavi, who was only too glad to win the affections of such a proud and rich merchant as Kovalan. He brought down all his wealth from his home and spent everything he had to please her. He presented her many costly jewels and built a fine palace in which he lived with her for a few years; and in those few years, all his wealth had dwindled away. At the end of those few years, too, the lady of his heart, Madavi, presented him with a new-born baby, his own daughter.

On the day the child was to be named, after a splendid feast was over, Kovalan said to Chitra and Madavi, "One of my fore-fathers

was a rich merchant of this city; and on one occasion he had to undertake a sea-voyage to a distant land. The ship left the Indian shores far behind and sailed on the open sea. The sun set among the waves in the west; and as dusk slowly crept over the bosom of the Brine, dark and threatening clouds were seen rising in the horizon. The wind blew fiercer and the waves grew bigger. In a short time, the sky turned inky dark with black overhanging clouds; and rain fell in torrents. The terrible billows heaved the boat up to a mountain height one moment and drew it down into a deep chasm the next.

"For hours, my fore-father and the weather-beaten crew contended with the raging elements; but they were to meet with ill-fortune—one after another. At mid-night a terrible gush of wind drove the ship right against a rock; and the next moment, it lay splintered into a thousand fragments on the tossing waves. The crew and cargo disappeared under the surgy surface of the ocean; and only the pieces of timber floated helter-skelter on the water.

"Of all the persons who travelled in the ship, my fore-father alone was saved. He

was the boldest of the crew and the best of swimmers. Though disconcerted by the crashing of the ship, he regained his presence of mind the next moment and caught hold of a big log of wood—one of the pieces of the wreckage. He held tightly to the log for a long time. Then, he felt his brain getting cloudy. After the terrible struggle against the anger of the ocean and the waves, he felt his powers abandon him; and he felt drowsy even amidst the bellowing waves. He would surely have let the log go and got drowned that night, had it not been for a Goddess who appeared before him, and spoke to him in a loud voice, 'Safety is near at hand. My island is not far off. Hold, hold the log a few minutes longer and thou wilt be saved. I am Manimekala, a Goddess sent by Indra to keep guard over this island. Thou hast done deeds worthy to win thee protection from this night's catastrophe; and I shall save thee.' So saying, the Goddess Manimekala lifted up the drowning man from the sea, 'where the surge was seething free,' and carried him on her wings to an island. When day dawned, my fore-father found himself lying safely on the sands of the coast.

The next ship, he could catch sight of, carried him back to Pukar. Ever after, he worshipped Manimekala ; and all his descendants have worshipped Her with the greatest devotion.

"My daughter should be named after Her ; and henceforth, she shall be known as Manimekala."

Madavi and Chitra readily consented to name the child Manimekala : and Kovalan felt immensely happy in being the father of so lovely and tender a child.

Time glided fast ; and Kovalan's name had spread far. He wrought deeds of valour that brought him fame. On one occasion, a poor Brahmin, while on his way home, was attacked by a maddened elephant that had thrown over its rider in its furious course. Kovalan, who was standing by at the time, saw the danger the Brahmin was in, and rushed to his rescue by standing before him and thus offering himself as a victim to the huge beast. Kovalan could ride elephants and control them as any one could do a tame horse. When the wild beast caught him up in its trunk and raised him aloft to dash him down on the ground, Kovalan very nimbly escaped from its grip and jumped on its neck.

Once there, he was the master of the animal which he tamed down in no time. He took it to its shed and tied it to its post. The Brahmin was thus saved from the dreadful peril that threatened his life; and, blessing his saviour, wended his way home.

A Brahmin lady of the town, at one time, went to fetch a pail of water, leaving in charge of her husband her young infant that was quietly sleeping in the cradle. While she was away, the Brahmin was called away from home by the King's orders. Then the Brahmin, directing a mongoose that he had been bringing up with the tenderest care, to watch over the sleeping child till its mother returned home, went to the palace. While both the father and mother were away, a black and hungry cobra crept up the cradle, and as the mongoose was very watchful, the cobra was soon noticed by it. In no time, it sprang up to the cradle, and catching hold of the reptile by the neck, fell down on the ground with it. A fierce struggle then ensued; and the cobra coiled itself round the mongoose, tighter and tighter. It hissed and whined and writhed; but all to no purpose. The mongoose had caught a firm hold on its vital

parts; and in a short time the deadly cobra lay on the ground in a pool of blood, torn to pieces. Proud of having saved the child, and glorying in its noble deed, the mongoose besmeared with the cobra's blood, stood on the threshold, awaiting its master's arrival. Just then, the lady returned with her pail of water; and as soon as she saw the mongoose with his face stained with blood, she thought that it had killed and eaten away her only child who was dearer to her than all the world. The mother's heart in her beat violently against her breast; and all haste and giddy with sorrow as she was, she aimed the pail at the mongoose, killing it in a moment. At the same time, her husband returned from the palace; and when they found what crime they had committed, and how ungrateful they had been to the mongoose that had saved their only child, they were stricken with sorrow. But the grief of the Brahmin was unparalleled. The mongoose that was dearer to him than his own child lay dead, killed by his own wife, after having done him the greatest service. He took a vow to wash away the sin by bathing in the waters of the sacred rivers of

India; and immediately, he started on his pilgrimage.

His wife was stricken down with unbounded sorrow at the separation of her lord; she ran madly in the streets of Pukar moaning over her cruel fate. Kovalan took pity on her; and, though he had grown poor of late, he spent of what remained to him, to console the poor and unfortunate mother. He sent messengers to all parts of the country in search of her husband, and at last he was gladdened by the news that the Brahmin had been found and brought back to Pukar, and that he had rejoined his wife. This incident made Kovalan's name a household word in Pukar, and every one praised him greatly for his largeness of heart.

Many such noble actions made Kovalan famous in Pukar. And, on the whole, his life with Madavi and his young daughter was most happy.

In those days, a grand festival, lasting for twenty-eight days, was held every year by the people of Pukar in honour of Indra, the Lord of the three worlds, whose capital they thought was Amaravathi, from where he sent dark clouds over the earth and broke

them with his club that sent out flashes of lightning and roared out peals of thunder. The clouds then poured down rain in torrents; and thus, they had the rains which gave them food. Indra, therefore, was their protecting and feeding deity; and for Him was the festival held; and for Him were prayers offered by the people of the Chola kingdom. The day following was one of rest and merry-making for them.

As Pukar was built on the sea-shore, the people of the city went to the beach on the morning of this day. They bathed in the sea before dawn: and as the splendid Orb of day rose in the East from amidst the tossing waves, they turned to the Lord of Light and the Giver of Life to offer him prayers. After this, they all prayed to Indra, and then remained encamped on the shore the whole day, playing, feasting, and making themselves merry in a thousand ways.

That year, Kovalan had a splendid tent erected on the beach for himself and Madavi. After offering prayers, they sat at their feast, after which they sat down together and began to play on the *yal*. Kovalan was himself a good musician and played on the strings excellently.

He sang :—

RATI.

O, Rati! Fairest of the fair!
Who owns bewitching beauty rare,
Whose eyes do twinkle as the stars,
Or sparkle as doth plated Mars,
Whose curls are darker than the cloud
That in storm the globe doth shroud,
Whose swanny gait doth win my heart,
And makes me blameless pleasures part,
Thou art she whose arrows soft,
Are tender passions strong and soft;
Thou art she whom I adore,
And love to look for ever more.

Kovalan sang this song innocently. But, most unfortunate it was, a *Devadasi* who was Madavi's neighbour, had been named after the Goddess, Ratidevi, in whose honour Kovalan sang the above song. Madavi heard the song and shrugged her shoulders. She thought that it showed his love for the *Devadasi*, Rati, though Kovalan had not thought of her at all. She at once grew jealous; and brooded over the words :—

"Thou art she whom I adore,
And love to look for ever more"

As soon as the song ended, Kovalan handed over the *yal* to her to sing. She really loved Kovalan from the bottom of her heart; and she loved him alone. But he had displeased her by his song; and as she was in a very jealous mood, she sang the following song in her turn, which she knew would displease him:—

MADANA.

Madana fair! Madana dear!
Thou art he that stands a-near,
With eyes that twinkle as the stars,
Or sparkle as doth plated Mars;
With face that beams as doth the Sun,
Who Night's dark forces just hath won;
With kingly gait that wins my heart,
And makes me blameless pleasures part;
Thou art he whose arrows soft
Are tender passions, strong and soft;
Thou art he whom I adore,
And love to look for ever more.

Kovalan knew that Madana was the God of Love and Beauty; and therefore, there could be nothing sinister in Madavi's song. But the passionate tone in which she sang, and the way in which she adapted his own song raised strong resentment in his heart. And,

But then, whither could he go? He had treated Kannaki cruelly in the past; and would she now forget all her wrongs and receive him back?

He knew that Kannaki was his devoted wife, and that she loved and adored him truly. He felt certain that though her wrongs and her sufferings were great, she would forget all for the sake of her husband. He, therefore, determined to go back to his own home and left Madavi immediately without uttering a word.

III. THE JOURNEY.

KANNAKI, that devoted wife of Kovalan, had spent all the years that he had spent with Madavi, in misery. She had been abandoned by her husband, whom she worshipped as a god. Still, she did not even murmur against her misfortune. Whenever Kovalan sent for money, she gave, as became a dutiful wife, all that he wanted. Everything she possessed, her costly jewels and other valuable articles, she gave willingly to him, though she knew they were after all intended for a *Devadasi*. She prayed; she wept; she sobbed and cried; still she said not a word against

Kovalan. She hoped, day after day, that he would return home. Day after day passed, and still Kovalan was not seen. Every evening the sun sank in the west, her heart also sank within her: and thus, the tedious days, the weary months, and the long long years wore on.

On the morning of the day following Indra's festival, Kannaki awoke at an early hour. She had dreamt pleasant as well as painful dreams during the previous night. She did not go to the sea-shore as others who were happier than herself had done; however, she bathed and devoutly offered prayers to the Sun and to Indra. Her fervent prayers to win back the love of her husband were also made: and the gods, it seemed, took pity on her: for, in her heart, she heard an inward voice say that before long she would behold her husband again in his own home.

Kannaki had as her friend, a Brahmin lady, Devandhi by name, who had been brought up from a very young age by Manaikan, and to whom she had confided her innermost thoughts. That evening, she was sitting with Devandhi, and relating to her the dreams she had the previous night.

"Last night's dreams oppress me," said Kannaki, "like a heavy load. I dreamt that my husband led me forth through fields and forests, over land and over water, till, at length, we arrived at a splendid city; we both entered it together. But, the people of that town charged us with a crime we were innocent of. Then, I separated from my husband, and soon heard people say that he met with a terrible calamity. Then I, who had never appeared before the male sex, confronted the King of that city, and charged him with a base crime. Yes, Devandhi, I dreamt that I, who had never blamed any one, charged a King with a deadly crime, as a result of which the King and the city were torn by Fire and Furies. I then dreamt that I joined my husband again, and enjoyed Elysian bliss with him. If only I should narrate all the joys I had, you would laugh at my foolishness."

"O, no, Kannaki," replied Devandhi, "the dream you had promises good and bad at the same time. You will, methinks, get back your husband, for he will return home soon. He, whom you adore, may peradventure, be on his way home even now."

"And so, Devandhi," said Kannaki, "you think the dreams portend some good to me shortly and a calamity in the distant future?"

"O, Kovalan!" continued she after heaving a sigh, "He, whom I worship is gone from me. He was to me as the sun to the world; but now, alas! it is years since I saw him. What dark clouds have passed over my head since I saw him last! What a heavy load has oppressed me all this time! O, Devandhi! You know not how much I have suffered. Loss of wealth is nothing; but the separation from my lord, who was everything to me, is truly what has troubled me most. How happy would I be if I should meet him again!"

"Be not forlorn, Kannaki," said Devandhi soothingly, "Something in me tells me your husband's return is near at hand. Put on a cheerful face, girl, and hope for the time when he will return."

"Hope!" returned Kannaki, "I have hoped, Devandhi, many a day, and waited patiently for his return. But I have ever been disappointed. How then can I hope now? And, will Kovalan be really here?"

"Will Kovalan be really here?" repeated a well-known voice that went deep into Kannaki's bosom to soothe all the pain that she had felt for a long time. "Dearest!' continued the voice, "Kovalan *is* really here to embrace you and to kiss you. Kovalan is here to fall at your feet, my angel, and beg pardon for all his fault. Kovalan is here to give you in a ten-fold degree the love that he withheld from you all these years. But will he be pardoned? Can he hope to be pardoned? Will Kannaki, who had given him all she had, receive him back? I dare not hope so much, for I have done her great wrong."

Kovalan had returned.

He had returned, indeed, with a heavy heart. As he entered the threshold of his own home, his heart beat violently. He found no servants in his palace, where, when he lived, tens of liveried men awaited his commands. Kannaki had no money to pay them and so she had sent them all away. At this he was struck with shame, as he was to blame for all the loss. He passed from chamber to chamber, and at last approached on tip-toe the one where his wife's familiar voice was heard. O, how he wanted to rush into the

room and embrace her! But he doubted whether she would gladly receive one who had wronged her so much. He stopped at the threshold and heard her say that she dared not even hope to see him again. He could not control himself. He rushed in, saying that he had really returned, and embraced her tenderly; and thus, the husband and wife met after a long period of separation.

A short while after, Devandhi took leave of Kovalan and Kannaki, and went away, wishing them all joy.

When Kovalan found himself alone with Kannaki, he asked her what wealth she had still left with her. He intended to start trade afresh and earn for himself and his beloved and faithful wife.

"Nothing," replied Kannaki, "Nothing except a pair of anklets".

Kovalan hung down his head in shame, for, he who had been the richest man in Pukar only a few years back had now nothing except a pair of his wife's anklets. After thinking for a long time, he said to her, "Dearest! I am ashamed of myself to such an extent that I can neither withstand my father's upbraidings nor look the other merchants of

this town in the face: and hence, I can no longer live in this city, dear though it be to both of us. I must earn by trade hereafter; and trade flourishes only in towns. Madura, the Capital of the Pandya Kings, is a big city; and if we go there, we can sell your anklets for a good round sum and with the proceeds commence trade again. Wilt thou go with me to Madura, Kannaki ?"

Kannaki, the dutiful wife, readily consented, for she Knew none more dear to her than Kovalan. She could not bear a second separation from him. They, therefore, determined to quit Pukar for good and go to Madura.

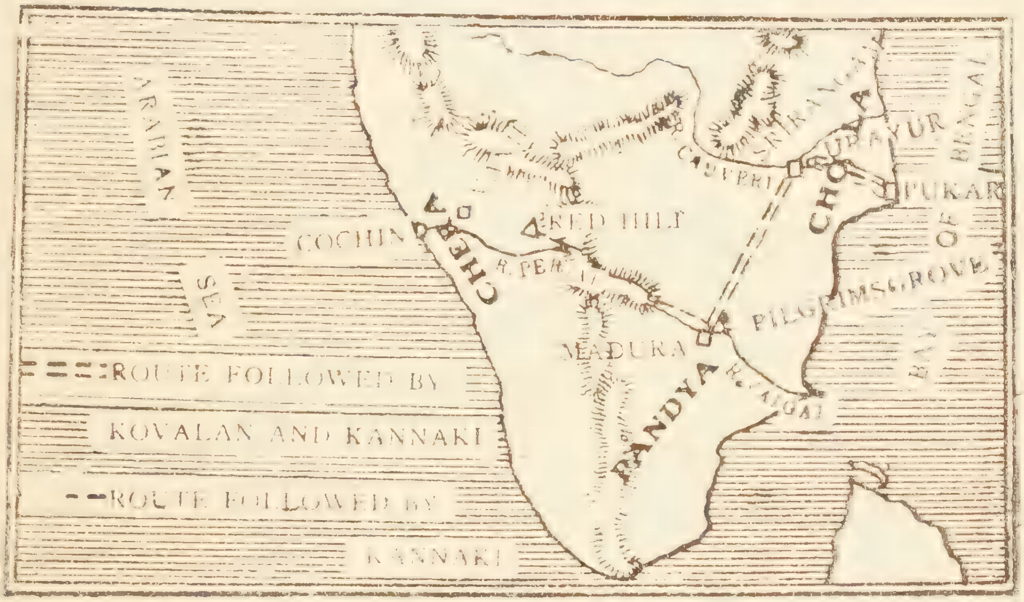
That night which was inky dark, when the partial moon had set at midnight, Kovalan and Kannaki stole away from their home, where they had spent many happy years, unknown even to the guards of the city. Street after street was passed; and a few hours before sunrise, they got out of Pukar.

The banks of the Cauvery were reached as the sun rose, bright and cheerful, in the east. The travellers took its northern bank, and walked up the river towards the west. Miles

and miles of paddy fields, large tracts of sugar-cane, the long and narrow leaves of which waved gracefully in the morning breeze, shady gardens of plantains and betel, and extensive woods through which wound the gliding Cauvery, through all these, they trod. The way, indeed, was quite pleasant; and for long hours they walked without feeling the tediousness of the journey. The rough path was softened for them by the songs of birds and of labourers in the fields; and village after village was passed. In this manner, and by easy stages, they went on their journey.

One day, at noon, while the scorching rays of the tropical sun were flooding the woods and paddy-fields and the rippling surface of the winding stream and the grassy pasture grounds, in dazzling blinding brightness, Kovalan and Kannaki rested under the shade of a mango grove for some time. A nun of the Jain creed too, Kounthi by name, who was also on her way to Madura in pursuit of knowledge, was resting in the same grove, and it was not long ere the weary travellers from Pukar made friends with her. After nightfall that day, they continued their

journey, accompanied by the Jain nun, who recited to them many an interesting story on the way, whilst the twinkling stars lighted their path.



MAP OF SOUTH INDIA.

They held on to the northern banks of the river till they reached Srirangam, where they worshipped at the Shrine of the Great Deity who attracts to Him pilgrims from even far-off Kashmir. Then, they got into a boat and crossed the Cauvery and got on to its southern bank, and stayed there in a grove for a few hours.

To that grove wended a low-bred man and his wife, who asked Kounthi who her fellow-travellers were. "Are they Cupid and Rati-

devi that they look so enchantingly beautiful?" they asked in one breath.

"No," replied Kounthi, "they are of flesh and blood; and having walked a long and weary way, they are taking rest. Let them not be disturbed now."

This tender and affectionate regard, on Kounthi's part, for Kovalan and Kannaki evoked laughter in the rustics who took her for the mother of Kovalan and Kannaki. They both cried at the same time, "What, ho! Has ever any one heard of brother and sister living as husband and wife? and do thy scriptures sanction such an infamous act?"

This atrocious taunt was too much for Kounthi to bear; she got wild with rage and blood rushed to her face. "Turn you both from men into hideous wolves," she cursed them, "and wander in thorny woods around Pukar."

Kounthi was a real sage, possessed of marvellous powers; and her words took effect immediately. No sooner had she pronounced the curse on the swain and his wife than they both turned into a he-wolf and a she-wolf howling horribly.

Kovalan and Kannaki took pity on them and begged Kounthi to modify her curse. They persuaded her to make her curse operate only for a year.

The wolves ran away to the wilds.

Then, the travellers continued their journey. Shortly after, they entered Urayur; and a few days more elapsed before they stepped on the territory of Pandyan, the King of Madura and finally reached its fine capital.

IV. THE HOME OF THE SHEPHERDESS.

Madura, from unknown times, was the capital of the Pandya kings, who, besides being powerful, were ever just and good rulers. At the time of our story, the King of Madura was the Pandyan Nedunj Chelian and the Queen Kopperun Devi.

Madura, built on the banks of the sacred river, Vaigai, is one of the finest cities of South India and is famous for its scholars and its magnificent Meenakshi Temple. The banks of the river are lined with delightfully fresh and green, stately trees of various kinds, under whose shade cattle and sheep rest at noon-time. Creepers, putting forth

tender shoots and flowers both in summer and winter, coil round their trunks and branches, while birds in thousands build their nests among them. On either side of the river lie fertile fields; and for miles and miles inland nothing can be seen but paddy fields and plantain gardens. The river itself runs through a great tract of undulating plains which are thickly populated. There are many cities on its banks; but Madura is the largest and most important of them all.

In olden days, it was more beautiful than it is now, surrounded as it then was by a high and impenetrable rampart and a deep and well-fed moat. Battlements and towers, with flags of victory flying merrily in the breeze at their tops, adorned the rampart, while the gopuras of innumerable temples rose high above the mansions in the city itself. Soldiers with drawn swords kept guard at the main gate. And the broad streets of the city through which camels and elephants, horses and mules tramped and ambled, loaded with the wealth of foreign countries or the rich produce of the plains through which ran the Vaigai, were lined on either side by tall cocoanut trees.

Madura had at its centre the splendid palace of its King, the chambers of which were richly furnished and adorned with the spoils of many a victory. At the centre of the State-chamber, a hall of vast dimensions, over the walls of which were hung brass and gold plates—the records of wars waged and kingdoms conquered—was a costly throne, artistically engraved, and jewelled all over. There were a large number of beautifully carved seats around this throne for the King's councillors. This palace of the Pandyans was one of the finest pieces of art of the Ancient Tamils.

To this splendid city it was, that Kovalan and Kannaki, led by Kounthi, went direct from Urayur across the unknown country. No sooner had the towers of Urayur faded into the dim distance, than they missed their way. They had great difficulty in picking their way; and, had not a Brahmin pilgrim, who took kindly to them, directed them on to the right path, they would have suffered untold hardships. It was then summer and the sun was scorching. To escape from the heat, the travellers decided to journey by night and rest by day. This was of immense relief particularly to Kannaki.

One morning, leaving Kounthi and Kannaki, Kovalan went to a pond to bathe and offer prayers to the rising Sun. There he met a Brahmin, Kousika by name, who had been sent by Madavi with a letter to him. The Devadasi could not bear the separation from her lover; she had hoped, throughout the evening of the day following Indra's festival, that he would return. But she was disappointed; and at nightfall she sent her maid Vasanthamala to Kovalan, earnestly beseeching him to return. But Kovalan took no notice of Vasanthamala or her message; and, when she pressed for a reply, he turned brutally to her and said, "Are not Devadasis practised in all the wiles of female levity and cunning? Are they not fickle? Who will expect fidelity from them? And is not Madavi a 'Devadasi'?" and went his way. Vasanthamala, therefore, returned sorrowfully to Madavi and told her all that Kovalan had spoken. Madavi loved Kovalan alone; and when she heard of his answer, her heart was broken. The early hours of dawn brought her the ill-news of Kovlan's departure with Kannaki from Pukar. On hearing this, she swooned away; and even after recovering

from her fit, she was sunk in sorrow for a long time. Then, she called Kousika to her and wrote a letter to Kovalan begging him to return to her immediately, and asked Kousika to carry it to her lover. Kousika went after Kovalan and at last overtook him at the pond, and gave him Madavi's letter, telling him at same time of his parents' immeasurable grif at his departure from Pukar.

Kovalan was sorry that he was the cause of so much grief to other people. He found at last, that Madavi had truly loved him, and had remained faithful to him. He had grievously erred in charging her with infidelity. He was moved to tears on her account; but what pained him more was the thought that he had caused immense grief to his parents whom he loved dearly. He wrote a long and tender letter to them, in which he set forth the varied causes that led to his flight from his home, and conjured them to feel more happy. He wrote another letter to Madavi, informing her of his great grief at the wrong he had done her; he begged to be excused, however, for his inability to return to Pukar at any time. These letters he gave to Kousika and asked him to return to Pukar

immediately and mitigate his parents' grief. Kousika started on his return journey.

Kovalan joined his wife and Kounthi and continued his journey. Kannaki's sufferings were great; her feet, tender as the petals of the lotus, trod the rough and thorny path; often, she suffered from severe thirst; and many a time, she had to forego her food. But, at last, the wearied travellers reached the cheerful banks of the Vaigai; and getting into a boat, they crossed over to its southern banks. As Madura was not then far off, they travelled by day too; and the third day after they reached the Vaigai, they came in sight of the towers of Madura which blazed forth in the red rays of the setting sun. A short distance from the walls of the city was a beautiful garden, with a few small but neat houses built of roughly hewn granite, where hermits and pilgrims generally sojourned. To one of these houses, Kounthi led Kovalan and Kannaki; and the party determined to halt at the Pilgrim's Grove, as it was popularly known, outside the grand City.

At dawn of the next day, Kovalan went into the city, where his father had many merchant friends, who, he thought, would

gladly receive him and his wife. He beheld with wonder and admiration, the ramparts, towers, and temples, beautiful buildings and the splendid royal palace; but, go where he would, not a single friend of his father was found. By sunrise, therefore, he returned to the Pilgrim's Grove and described all the beautiful sights of Madura to Kannaki and Kounthi.

And such an awe-inspiring sunrise it was! The mighty Orb, that every day rose cheerful and bright, emitting radiant beams, rose that morning in sombre gloom, and peeped through a fleeting cloud at the big city that was to pass through a terrible calamity that day. It looked crimson as though it were a ball of fire intended to burn the city, and looked gorily at its pinnacles and buttresses, at its temples and palaces, and at its gardens and lawns. Crimson looked the fields; crimson shone the tops of trees; crimson, the ripplets of the river; crimson, the men and animals that walked in the streets: crimson looked every thing in the city under the rising morning sun, that day. It was a dreadful, awful sight to see; and all men were aghast. Never before had the people of Madura seen a morn

so ghastly; and their fright was all the more keen, since an old saying had prophesied that dread destruction would befall Madura on the day on which the Lord of radiant light should look down on the city with blood-shot eyes. But it was only for a moment; and, as in a short while, the sun changed colour and shed his bright rays, the men became cheerful and went to their work without thinking more of the overhanging calamity. But, all the same, a heavy weight oppressed their minds and all expected a calamity to overtake them before sun-set.

Kovalan's heart too was heavy within him, for, he had dreamt horrible dreams the previous night. By the time he returned from Madura, a well-known friend, Madalan by name, and a respectable shepherdess of Madura, known by the name of the Madari had joined the party; and Kovalan told them he dreamt that he rode on a buffalo, whilst a vile being tormented Kannaki, and that he got to the world of Eternal Happiness along with her. This dream, he said, portended great calamities. Though his wife and friends tried hard to remove the oppressive feeling from Kovalan's mind, they could not do so.

Madari offered hospitality to Kovalan and Kannaki under her roof till they could find a good place to lodge in. This offer was cheerfully accepted; and so she returned home, accompanied by Kovalan and his wife. Crossing the fortifications through the main gate, they walked to the shepherds' quarters in the city, where Madari had a charming house, by the side of which had been built a new little cottage. This small cottage she gave to Kovalan, and left her daughter Aiyai there as a help-mate to Kannaki. And thus, Kovalan, the merchant prince of the first city in South India, was lodged with his lovely wife, Kannaki, in the home of the Shepherdess, Madari, at Madura.

V. THE ANLKET.

It was noon of the same day. The burning tropical sun shone mercilessly overhead, scorching the trees, fields, and buildings below, and blinding men and animals by his dazzling brightness—a fit sequel to his ominous look in the morning.

The men of Madura, however, were very busy even on such a hot day.

In the home of the Shepherdess, Kannaki prepared a humble meal for Kovalan. When

he had partaken of it, he looked up into Kannaki's face. How charming it seemed to him! He just recollected how much he had harmed the possessor of so much loveliness and grace and such noble conduct. Then he thought of his father.

"O, My father," he cried aloud, "how much grieved are you on my account!" And then, after heaving an agonizing sigh, he continued, "Am I really at Madura? Or, is this all a nightmare? If true, to what end are these happenings going to lead me? Are these sufferings the result of heinous deeds done in my previous birth? Much confused am I and unable to distinguish the true from the false. I have failed in my duties to my parents, and particularly to you, Kannaki!" He went on bewailing, "What crimes have I not committed? I have dragged you, a princess among merchant princesses, over rocks and thorny paths, and across swift-flowing streams. Having hurt you so severely, how can I expect any happiness hereafter?"

"But, Dear Kannaki," he continued after mourning for a long time, "The past is all ill; and now we have to think of the future only. Let me sell one of your anklets an

A goldsmith, gaudily dressed, and followed by a hundred minor smiths, cast his sinister glance at the jewel. He happened to be the Palace Goldsmith. Kovalan saw his eager glance and approached him, saying, "Friend, Smith! I have an anklet fit for queens to wear. Pray, value it." The smith readily consented to do so; and he, who had been decreed by Fate to be the Destroyer of Kovalan's life, took the anklet into his hands, and, examining it for some time, said, "Sir, I know of no other who would buy and wear so costly an anklet as this except the Queen of this country. I shall persuade her to buy it. So saying, he took Kovalan to a spot near his own home, where he asked him to remain till his return, and then, hastened towards the Palace.

"A fine chance, this," said he to himself as he walked fast to see the King, "The single anklet that I stole away from the Palace last night remains with me; and here is a man possessing an anklet that strongly resembles the one I stole. Before the King learns of my crime, I will turn his wrath on this rustic and make him out as the thief who has stolen the Queen's jewel. I

will thus be saved; and, besides, a rich reward may await me for this seeming trouble."

So thought the smith, who, as ordained by Providence in its own inimitable way, was indeed to get his *true* reward for his crime!

That noon, the Queen was wild with fury. She had lost her favourite jewel, the anklet; she had dreamt terrible dreams as well, overnight. She had spent the morning hours of the day in a vain search after her jewel; and her failure to recover it irritated her greatly. The King learnt of the loss and the Queen's ill-humour at noon, and was on his way to her chamber to appease her, when the goldsmith entered the Palace and stood before him. He fell down at the King's feet and, after praising him greatly, said, "O, King! he, who stole the Queen's anklet from the Palace despite the night-watch, is even now standing at my door with the lost jewel."

When Pandyan heard of this, he at once called his soldiers to him; and, though he intended to say to them, "Bring me the man who stole Our Queen's anklet for execution," he actually said in his great excitement and

confusion, obviously prompted by Fate which controls the destinies of men, "If he, whom the goldsmith shows, has the Queen's anklet in his hands, execute him and bring me the jewel."

The soldiers followed the smith to his home, where he showed them Kovalan, who was waiting for him. When they beheld his manly features, they thought that the smith was only playing a nasty trick, for they could not easily believe that one who appeared so innocent and handsome would have stolen the jewel.

The goldsmith approached Kovalan and said, "Friend, I have brought the King's servants who desire to have a look at the anklet."

And Kovalan readily showed them the anklet he had brought with him. Even then, they were not prepared to kill him. His majestic bearing overawed them and his face that shone with the brilliance of innocence and nobility dissuaded them from their evil purpose.

At this the goldsmith felt disheartened; but still he would try another chance—so he thought.

"What cowards are you all!" he said to them, "know you all the tricks of thieves?

Know you the Laws of thieving? That delectable Code sets forth the eight important mates to a thief, namely, charms, devotion, doctoring, snare-laying, cunning, place, time, and instrument, and says:—

'Sing Charms and win renown greater than a King's.

Pretend Devotion and we shall behold thee among the Sons of Indra.

Pose a Doctor and win wealth and glory.

Lay Snares and the riches of the world are at your disposal.

Cunning is what will procure you Indra's Garland of Gold.

Choose the proper place for thieving and never be found there, thou wilt win thy object.

Thy work done at the proper time, not even the wisest could find thee out.

If those who possess powerful instruments lay hands on sparkling gold, who would oppose them?

Night or day, both are the same, these mates accompanying thee.

"So says the Code for thieves, and they follow it with profit."

Then, he went on narrating the story of a practised thief. "Once, while our Crown Prince was sleeping in his bed at night," he said, "a thief stole into the room dressed as a girl,—having observed the place properly

during the day, by pretending to be a courier, and loitering about the palace—and hid himself among the shadows of the pillars in the room, till the Prince fell fast asleep and began to snore. Then, he took out, as stealthily as possible, the garland of pearls around the Prince's neck; but the tips of his fingers touched the neck of the Prince, who woke up immediately. Finding his garland missing, the Prince drew his sword which was lying on a table near by and attacked the thief, who, quickly sprang to the table, possessed himself of the scabbard, and presented its mouth so artfully towards his attacker that the sword was thrust into it only. After vainly attempting to stab the undaunted opponent for a long time, the Prince threw off the sword and rushed at him with closed fists. The cunning thief jumped behind a pillar which the Prince took for his antagonist and began blindly attacking it. The thief thereby gained time and stole out of the room in just the same manner as he had entered it.

"Hence, ye soldiers", he concluded "Thieves cheat men by their appearances, which are least reliable. When you see

the jewel in his hands, why do you hesitate to take him for the thief? Are you going to disobey the King's orders?"

He told them many other stories of thieves who put on an innocent face to escape punishment.

Among the soldiers was one, a rough war-worn man, who had not even a grain of pity in his heart. He wanted to earn a rich reward by prompt action, and when he heard all that the goldsmith had said, he drew his sword and rushed wildly at Kovalan, who was all along ignorant of what was going on. His back was turned towards the soldier who was springing on him. The other soldiers cried in the same breath, "Pray Sir! Jump aside! The sword is falling on your head." But it was all too late. With a strong arm, with a sure aim, the merciless soldier struck down Kovalan; the steel blade passed right across the body; and Kovalan lay dead, almost cut in two. The blood gushed forth profusely from the wide opening of the sword-cut; and in a short time, Kovalan lay swimming in a pool of his own warm blood.

It was a pitiable, dreadful, horrible sight, indeed. Kovalan, the handsomest of men,

the richest of merchants, the most innocent of victims, the beloved of Kannaki and the darling of his parents, lay dead at the market place of Madura. Has ever a greater crime been committed by a King ? It was murder in cold blood.

At the same moment, the sceptre, the rod of Justice, bent in the King's hand. At no time had it bent before ; and when Kovalan lay murdered, it bent for the first time, as justice had egregiously miscarried.

Kovalan was really innocent ; the wicked goldsmith knew it. But why did *he* become the victim of so base a treachery ? Why did he, a native of Pukar, come all the way long to Madura and die whilst in the prime of life ?

The only answer is :— Fate, Old Fate, had demanded and the All-wise and Immutable Providence had ordained such a dread calamity to overtake him.

VI. THE ANKLETS—TRUE AND FALSE.

Kovalan was not the only one at Madura who had omens that boded ill, for, Madari, the shepherdess, had worse fore-bodings of an impending calamity. The milk became sour

and did not turn into curd; no butter could be gathered from the curd; the cows, trembling and shivering, shed tears of blood, and bellowed harshly; and the lambs that were wont to frisk about and gambol, were then sleepily drowsing as though in sorrow. These, Madari knew, fore-shadowed disaster.

She was struck dumb and remained looking vacantly for a long time. Recovering from her stupor, she decided to appease the angry gods, and at once arranged a dance in honour of the Omnipotent Vishnu. Songs and hymns in praise of the Lord of the Universe were sung; and the dance was gone through. She got tired at the end and wanted to take a refreshing bath in the Vaigai. She, therefore, started for the river; and on her way thither, she learnt of the terrible end which had overtaken Kovalan. She hastened back home with a ghastly face; and, finding her powers failing her, and unable to reveal the dread tidings to Kannaki herself, she was speaking in low tones about the horrible deed to others of the household.

Kannaki grasped that something wrong had happened and that it concerned her. With a pale face and a trembling voice,

she said, "O, Madari! My Lord has not yet returned. My mind is ill at ease on account of his delay; my heart sinks within me, and I feel depressed—I know not why. Something in me whispers strangely that I am soon to be subjected to a calamity. I know not what you are talking about. Pray, tell me all, even if it be the worst that I may ever hear."

At these simple, artless, innocent words, Madari's daughter, Aiyai, who entertained sincere affection to Kannaki, though she had been with her only for a short time, could not contain herself, for she, too, had come to know of Kovalan's bitter end. Burning tears gushed forth from her eyes; and she burst out, "O, Kannaki! O, wretched, miserable, forlorn Kannaki! Kovalan, thy husband, has met his end, murdered by the King, who took him for the thief that stole the Queen's anklet".

Alas! What could poor Kannaki do? These words pierced her ears as though they were myriads of poisoned blades. She fumed, fretted, gasped, and hissed; shivered, sobbed, and shrieked; clasped her hands, beat her breast and rent her hair, fell on the ground, rose up again and ran wildly hither and

thither in the shepherdess' home ; and, at last, blinded by her burning tears, knowing not where she was, or what had happened and why she raved, and completely forgetting herself in her sorrow, she ran right against a wall, and was thrown down on the ground by the force of the concussion. Her senses left her immediately and she swooned away.

It took a long time for Kannaki to recover from her swoon ; and then, she rose to her feet, wild with rage and sorrow. She, then, collected all her thoughts and, understanding the enormity of the loss she had sustained, she burst forth at last, "O, Kovalan ! Pandyan failed to do his duty, and thou art dead. I have lost thee for ever ; I am now left helpless like a lamb in the wilderness, where, a wolf, has devoured the mother goat.

"The King of Madura to err and I to suffer widowhood and rot in this world ! He, the King that wanders with Death to devour Innocence, to err, and I to suffer terribly ! Is this just ?

"How am I to live hereafter ? Live ! Life to me is awful ! Death is welcome.

"O, Friends !" she continued addressing the dames and maidens around, "Hearken ere

I die; heed my words now, and judge yourselves."

So saying, she turned her face upwards and looked at the Sun and said, "O. Lord of Light that penetrates into the darkest corners of the world, *Thou* knowest all. Was my husband a thief?"

And a Divine Voice from above answered, "O, Kannaki! Thy husband was not a thief; and the terrible Fire-God, Agni will soon devour this city that has called Kovalan a thief."

* * * *

Kannaki ran through the streets of Madura with her other anklet in her hands, crying in piteous tones to all the women of the town, "O, Ye women that live under the flag of an unjust Ruler! I have suffered as no one has ever done. Here is the fellow of the anklet that I gave my husband. It is of enormous value and they have murdered him for this jewel. What splendid Justice reigns in this land!"

"Can I see my husband alive again?" she continued, "If I see him alive, it will be a great wonder, a miracle. Shall I hear his sweet voice again? If this happens, it will be a greater wonder, a greater miracle."

And she left the palace.

The Queen could not survive her Lord even for a few moments; she fell down on his corpse and sudden sorrow put an end to her miserable life.

Kannaki then proclaimed in tones that reached even the farthest corners of the town, "O gods and men of this ancient city! I have been wronged beyond bounds; and I am furious with rage against the town that has unjustly killed Kovalan and brought early widowhood on me. Justice has already overtaken the chief miscreant, the king, and also his Queen. Now Madura shall be destroyed wholesale. I shall be the destroyer."

So saying, she ran round Madura thrice, and when she halted, Agni, the God of Fire, stood before her, dressed as a Brahmin, and said, "O, most faithful of wives! I have been ordered by the Almighty to consume this town on the day you are wronged by her King; and I shall now do my duty. But whom shall I leave untouched and alive?"

"Brahmins, sages, faithful wives, babes, children, old men, and cows," answered Kannaki "These shall escape from thy power." Agni bowed low to her and vanished.

Kannaki stared at Madura with eyes of fire. Immediately, the whole town was ablaze The palace caught fire the temples, houses and all, in Madura. It was fire, fire, everywhere. The conflagration spread far and fast. The flames rose high in the dark sky, for night had spread her veil over the city by that time ; its brightness could be seen from a distance of a hundred miles. Men, horses, dogs, all shivered, shrieked, and screamed. Thousands were burnt to death ; many were crushed by the falling of roofs and walls ; and innumerable lives were lost in their very attempt to escape from the fast spreading flames. And, thus, in a few hours, the magnificent city lay in ashes, thick smoke hovering over its ruins.

Kovalan's death was indeed, terribly avenged.

*   *   *   *

Madura lay in ashes, razed to the ground ; and what a sight it presented, the next day at dawn, when the sun again rose blood-red in the east, and looked down on the ruined city ! And as though his anger had been appeased, his colour changed into diamond brightness a minute after.

Where was Madura, the grand city, whither people flocked in thousands? where, the Palace that adorned it? where, the temples with their domes and *gopuras*?, where, the streets through which proudly trod elephants and camels, horses and mules? where, the women, and children who used to sing and play merrily within the chambers of the houses? Was there any festival held that morning? Did the temple musicians sing their harmonious notes to awaken the temple god and men?

But yesterday, Madura was full of men and full of life; and now everything had disappeared, d e s t r o y e d completely by the avenging wife of Kovalan—so great is the power wielded by chaste women.

Kannaki, who had carried her vengeance through, stood on the burning ashes of the dead, as the victor. But, alas! was she then at least happy? No; she could never be joyful after her husband's death. Her heart was rent with sorrow at the loss of her Lord. She ran wildly over the ruins, stood for a minute looking with blank eyes at them, and then fell down fainting among the bones and corpses.

Madurapathi, the Guardian Deity of Madura, appeared before her then, and tried to console her; but consolation was not for Kannaki. He said to her in kind tones, "O, Kannaki, truest of wives! I know the cause of your sorrows and will tell you what it is. The Pandyan Kings had ever been just rulers and the late King is not to blame for all this dire calamity.

"Once, a Brahmin, Keerandhai by name, left his wife at Madura, entrusting her to the care of its King, whilst he went on a pilgrimage, which took many years to be completed. All the time he was away, his wife was safely guarded by the King. One day Keerandhai returned home; and that night, when the King, as was his wont every night to do, went along the streets to see for himself if the guards of the city kept watch properly, he heard the voice of a man inside the Brahmin's home. Not knowing that Keerandhai had returned home, he knocked at the door, thinking that thieves had broken into the building. When Keerandhai heard the knock, he turned to his wife.

'What knock is that?' he asked her, 'Are there thieves in this city?'

'When you went on your pilgrimage, my dear,' answered his wife, 'you left me under the Pandyan's protection. Will not the same Pandyan who watched over me all these years, guard us now from thieves, if thieves they really are who knock at our door?'

"The Pandyan heard this and went away, glad at heart that people felt safe under his sway; So just and powerful were the Pandyans.

"Pandyan Nedunjchelian is not to blame entirely for thy sorrows. From unknown times, there has been a prophecy to the effect that on the day when the planets stand facing the sun, thereby changing the colour of sun-light itself at morning time, Madura shall be swallowed up by the flames. It so happened that yesterday, the planets stood in their dreaded posts and faced the sun; and it happened also that yesterday thou and thy husband came into Madura; besides, it happened, that yesterday there was the curse of such a chaste woman as thyself. It is the combination of these causes that razed Madura to the ground, and brought misery on thee."

"Pray, Madurapathi," said Kannaki, as she grew interested in what the Deity said and eager to know the cause of her grief,

"What was that curse? And why did any one curse at all?"

Madurapathi replied, "Vasu, King of Singapura, and Kumara, King of Kapilapura, waged war with each other; and their capitals became unsafe for strangers. But one avaricious jeweller, Sangama by name, wanted to amass wealth by trading at Singapura, whither he accordingly went with his wife, Neeli, and displayed his wares at the market place. Bharata, one of Vasu's Palace-guards, thought Sangama was a spy of the foe and took him forcibly to the King. Vasu believed all that Bharata said and allowed him to kill Sangama before his eyes. The merchant was thus murdered unjustly; and his wife, Neeli, was grieved beyond consolation. For fourteen days she wept over the great loss she had sustained; and then, she climbed up a hill intending to put an end to her existence and join her husband. But before parting with her life, she cursed those that had harmed her,—particularly Bharata,—that they should suffer as much as she had done. Bharata, reborn as Kovalan, paid penalty for his heinous crime with his life; and you, having married him, have become subject to such a great affliction.

"On the fourteenth day from this," the Deity went on, "thou wilt meet thy husband who will take thee to Heaven, and thou wilt never be separated from him thereafter."

So saying, Madurapathi vanished.

* * * *

From that day, no rains fell in the Pandya kingdom; no crops were raised; famine and poverty raged; and diseases devastated the whole land. The whole country lay under a blighting curse.

After some time, Vetriver Chelian, the Crown Prince, who had escaped the conflagration, having been away from Madura at the time, rebuilt Madura; and a new town rose up on the ashes of the old. But poverty was still severe.

He therefore built a fine temple for Kannaki and sacrificed at this temple a thousand goldsmiths to propitiate her. The wrath of the Faithful Wife was thus appeased and the Image in her temple seemed to look kindly on the rising town. Then rains poured down; rivers ran brimful; fields were green with the growing crops; and famine, disease, and poverty disappeared completely from the land. The prosperous and rich kingdom of the south regained its previous flourishing state.

THOUGH BREAKERS BREAK OUR BARK.

I

A lovely nest a pair of doves
 Once on a tree did build;
The love-birds, in their charming house,
 The cup of joy they filled.

II

Revelling in the dark-blue sky,
 Or chirping songs of love,
They led the life of Gods on high,
 Or Angels that do love.

III

One dewy morn the she-bird spake,
 With eyes of brimming tears,
"Pity this morn when we awake,
 For now, our end us nears."

IV

"Above our heads an eagle strong
 Doth wing its pouncing flight;
Behold! below the arrow long,
 Well-aimed, would climb this height."

V

"All fiery look the eagle's eyes;
 All sharp his ready bill;
All stern his looks the hunter pries;
 All sure his shaft would kill."

VI

The dreading, trembling, shiv'ring pair
 To escape knew not how;
The he-dove said with standing hair,
 "There is a God above."

VII

Just then the hunter pressed his toe
  Firm on a cobra's hole,
To shoot his heartless shaft of woe,
  Would hear the birds, dire dole.

VIII

Then from the bow the arrow shot,
  And whizzed beside the nest;
And thro' the misty sky it got
  Unto the eagle's chest.

IX

The eagle with the arrow fell
  Down on the grassy ground;
And deadly cobra-bitten fell
  The hunter in a swound.

X

"Now all is well," the he-dove said,
  Chirrupping merr'ly loud,
"The hunter and the eagle dead,
  The cobra spreads their shroud."

XI

"Unknown and wond'rous are HIS ways;
  Though breakers break our bark ,
Though billow on billow rolls and sprays,
  HE lights us through the dark."

XII

"Though tumbling waves come sweeping on,
  Though tender is our prow,
To take us shore-ward on and on,
  There is a God above."

V. VEERARAGHAVAN.

(*The Pachaiyappa's College Magazine, October* 1924).

ERRATA

Page.	Line.	
22	4	Read "as the sun" for "the sun"
35	8	Read "the same" for "same"
,,	9	Read "grief" for "grif"
39	17	Read "The ANKLET" for "The ANLKET"
43	15	Insert inverted commas (") after *it*
61	3	Read "fire, as did the temples" for "fire the temples"
69	23	Read "Agni, the Fire-God" for "Agni and the God of Fire"
80	4	Read "bear" for "hear"